

## The Bet

So there were once these three friends, Ronnie, Mike and Carlos, who loved camping. They'd go every weekend, to the deepest, darkest parts of the woods and stay there roughing it until the next day. Then they'd come back every Monday and brag about their courageous trip, usually adding things like wolves or bears for added drama.

Everyone at school loved the stories, but there were some who got annoyed at their constant obvious lies. One day, a bigshot from the football team, Dave, challenged them to a bet. He said that if they stayed in his uncle's cabin, which was supposedly haunted, he would give them each \$100. They took the challenge, more out of pride than the chance to win big money(although that was a good incentive). Dave set the boundaries for the challenge; they couldn't bring any phones, laptops, tablets, etc., they couldn't bring any weapons beyond things essential for survival(a pocket knife for example), and if they wanted out they had to fire a flare Dave was giving them.

They scoffed at the bet, believing it'll be a piece of cake.

They were wrong.

The following Friday the three friend's met at Carlos' and then were picked up by Dave. As they were riding towards the cabin in Dave's hot new Cadillac(courtesy of his dad), a news report interrupted the song they were listening to. A voice told them that a psychopath had escaped the local mental institution, and should anyone see him they were urged to call the police immediately. Mike joked that they'd be dealing with ghosts and psychos now. The other three chuckled, knowing the odds of running into a killer in the forest were almost none.

Eventually they pulled up tot he cabin. It looked cozy, like a cabin you'd see in a Christmas card. The three friends, having seen enough horror movies to know that when a place is haunted you get chills the first time you see it, knew the place wasn't haunted.

Dave helped them set up, showed them the cabin and was soon on his way. For the next few hours the friends played cards, shared funny stories and what they'd do with the hundred bucks. Mike was going to get the new shooter game that was about to come out, Ronnie was going to buy a puppy for his nephew's birthday and Carlos joked that he was going to spend it on hookers and blow.

Soon night fell upon and the temperature dropped, and in the spirit of camping, the three decided to draw straws to see who go get firewood. Carlos came up as the loser, and boasted that he would have gone anyway. As their friend slipped out the door Mike and Ronnie began getting a feeling of dread. Not one of supernatural origin, but they began thinking of the radio broadcast, of the escaped lunatic. Both decided that it was a a million-to-one chance anything would happen and put it out of their mind.

Then they heard a phone ring.

Both were very obviously startled, as Dave said there were no phones in the house. Mike reluctantly answered, and was surprised to hear Dave on the other side of the line. Mike started by asking Dave why he there was a phone here, and Dave answered with a smart remark, explaining that of course there would be a phone there, his uncle needed one to communicate, but that wasn't important. Dave sounded scared, and told them they HAD to leave.

Mike laughed timidly, asking why. Dave told them that he had just gotten off the phone with his uncle, who said the three were in grave danger, as the entity that was in the cabin never let anyone leave alive. Mike, after taking a moment to process the info, laughed, saying that if he wanted to get them to leave he'd have to try harder than that, and hung up the phone. Mike told Ronnie about the conversation, and the two laughed at Dave's horrible attempt to scare them.

After a while the two began to wonder what was taking Carlos so

long; collecting sticks wasn't hard. It was then they heard yelling in the woods. They jumped, scared at the sudden noise, and huddled closer. After a minute, Ronnie concluded it was Dave screwing with them, going to the next level trying to scare them. Mike agreed, just as the front door began being pounded on. The two knew this had to be Dave, and that Carlos was probably in league with the football player and wanted to scare them, which was why he was taking so long. Mike and Ronnie hopped up and barricaded the front door, taunting Dave and Carlos for going so far to scare them. Mike and Ronnie then went back to talking, ignoring the banging. But soon they got worried, as the banging hadn't stopped. It was still going but was getting softer and softer.

They stayed awake for quite a bit longer, listening to the banging in amazement of how much trouble Dave and Carlos were going through just to scare them. Their amazement soon turned to panic as the banging, which had turned to knocking and soon scratching, continued, this time accompanied by soft sobbing and groans.

Neither were brave enough to check to see if it were Dave, Carlos, a ghost or a psycho-killer. They sat, huddled on the couch in the living room until they fell asleep from exhaustion well into the night.

They two boys woke up to a loud honking the next morning. Ronnie looked out the window and saw Dave in his sedan, honking. Ronnie opened the window and called to him, taunting the jock for going through so much to scare them only to fail. Mike joined in, yelling about Dave's stupid phone call and the banging. But the two noticed something strange, Dave wasn't leaving his car. In fact, upon closer inspection the jock looked terrified, staring at the front door in horror. The two friends became more horrified than ever, and slowly, slowly turned their heads toward the door. They couldn't believe what they saw.

First they noticed the trail of blood from the woods to the entrance, and then saw Carlos. He was slumped over, leaning on the door, his back covered in blood and his shirt torn to pieces.

But what stood out the most were his hands.

They were caked in blood, his finger nails torn off, stuck in large grooves made in the door.